

The Festival of the Circumcision of our Lord
St. Luke 2:21
January 1st, 2019
Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

His Name Was Called JESUS

In Nomine Iesu!

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

O Lord, send out Thy Light and Thy Truth, let them lead us. O Lord, open Thou my lips, that my mouth may show forth Thy praise. O Lord, graciously preserve me, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Today, our Lord + Jesus begins His sacrificial ministry for us. One might think it strange that we celebrate a circumcision; the removal of the foreskin. One might ask, “What does all this mean?” It means that today we celebrate what Christ has done for us. On this day, the eighth day after Christ’s birth, the day when all Hebrew boys were circumcised, our Lord + Jesus is circumcised and named. But this day is about more than just the removal of flesh. It is about the day that Christ first spills His blood for us. He places Himself under the Law for us. By His following the commandment of God that all male children should be circumcised on the eighth day, He is placed under the Law for us. His saving work for us begins today. It appears that the Lord + Jesus does not wait very long in getting to His work of saving us. Our Lord + Jesus gets right to the task a mere eight days out of the womb. The plan for our salvation is undertaken right away. It is a reason to celebrate.

Now, for others, last night was a night of partying and revelry to ring in the New Year. And there indeed is a reason to celebrate today—to usher in a new year. But for the Church, and for all her children, the partying, the celebration, is centered upon what Christ has done for us. The Church begins the new year focused upon our Savior; upon His sacrificial death in our place. While the rest of the world is focused upon how many glasses of champagne one can put down their throat without vomiting, and shooting off fireworks at 3 a.m. when people are trying to sleep, the Church turns her focus to the tree of the holy cross and to the blood of our Lord + Jesus Christ spilled on that holy cross.

It was the custom that baby boys would receive their names at their circumcisions, just like if we had four midweek Advent services, we would have heard about St. John the Baptist’s circumcision and the big debate over whether he should be called John or Zacharias. Now you probably all remember the story that Zacharias asked for a piece of paper to write on because he was still unable to speak, and wrote down, “*his name is John,*” and that settled the debate. Well today St. Luke, the Evangelist, tells us that the name given to the baby boy born to the Blessed Virgin Mary and Joseph, His stepfather, was + “*Jesus.*” Now, by itself this name was not the type of name that would have made people turn their heads, and say, “you named Him what?” (As the naming of St. John the Baptist did.) The name of + “*Jesus*” was a very common name at the time. The Hebrew form of the name was “*Joshua.*” Now there is an individual in the Old Testament, who bears that name. As a matter of fact, he has a whole book named after him—Joshua—and we will be studying his book in Bible class not too long from now. He was the successor to Moses. Also at the time of our Lord + Jesus, there were other boys who were

named “Joshua” as well. To further illustrate how common a name + “*Jesus*” was, if a person was to read the book of Joshua in the Greek language of the Septuagint, every time that Joshua’s name is mentioned, the Greek translates his name as + “Ἰησους,” that is, + “*Jesus*.”

What that means is that many mothers and fathers wanted to name their sons, + “*Jesus*,” or “Joshua,” and they did. The name + “*Jesus*,” as you probably remember, means “Savior.” What does that mean? What is the significance of Jewish fathers and mothers naming their boys, “Savior”? It means that in the naming of their sons, they showed their desire that the Messiah would come; that their “Christ;” their “Anointed One” would one day be born. It shows us how badly they desired a Savior to come to them? The people of Israel longed for the Savior to be born. They wanted the King of the Jews to come and reign over them. They had waited patiently ever since the fall into sin by Adam. Now they longed for that day with all their hearts, souls and minds. They waited with eager anticipation, just like a pregnant mother waits for the day her baby will be born. It is the same with the Church today; she waits with eager expectation and longing for the return of Christ. We wait with longing hearts for our Lord + Jesus Christ to come again and remove us from this vale of tears, and take us to our home in Heaven.

The rest of the world today, the non-Christian world, will be all worried about “resolutions.” What a person hopes to accomplish in the new year. Today, the Church’s “resolution,”—what we hope for in the coming year—is for our Savior to appear in all of His glory and restore Heaven and Earth to its original created splendor; to remove the weight and stain of sin from us for all eternity.

And today St. Luke, the Evangelist, preaches into our ears the good news that the Messiah has come, that He has shed His blood for us at His circumcision, and He is called + “*Jesus*,” which means “Savior.” Unlike all the other boys who were born, circumcised, and named + “*Jesus*,” this child was indeed the Christ-child. This is *the* Baby, which the people of Israel desired for so long. This is *the* Baby boy, Who we today look upon and rejoice that He has shed His blood for us; that He has won forgiveness, life and salvation for us. It is in Him that we place our trust, and our hope. And it is upon Him that all our “resolutions” should rest.

I for one have never been big on resolutions, but if you are, let me give you some ideas. Our “resolutions” for the new year, we who are members of the Body of Christ, should not be centered in what we do or how we are to get along in the new year, but they should be centered on what Christ has done for us. Such a list of “resolutions” might include: 1) I resolve to rejoice more in my Holy Baptism, wherein my heart has been circumcised by the Holy Ghost, and I have been made a child of God, and have been washed clean of my sins, and been made pure and holy before God, and wear the white robe of the righteousness of Christ. 2) I resolve to hear, read, study, and inwardly digest and mark God’s holy Word more; opening my ears to hear of what God has done for me through His One and Only Son + Jesus. 3) I resolve to come more frequently to the Lord’s house for worship, so that I might be strengthened and sustained in faith by being around the Word of God, and around others who share the same faith as I do, so that I might never lose my hope in salvation. And, I resolve, that it will not just be on Sundays, but whenever this parish offers the chance for public worship. 4) I resolve to take every opportunity to confess my sins to God, in order that I might hear the words of absolution, that is, forgiveness from the pastor as from God Himself. And not only to confess my sins in my private prayer chamber, but to take the great opportunity that the Christian Church offers for private confession and absolution from my pastor, where I hear personally into my very own ears that my sins are forgiven. 5) I resolve to gladly come to the Lord’s Table, reflecting upon the Lord + Jesus Christ’s death and resurrection for my salvation, while I eat His very Body, and drink His very Blood, in, with, and under bread and wine, so that I might indeed “*depart in peace*” from this holy house knowing full well that my sins have been forgiven by God.

As you can see from these “resolutions,” for the Christian, the whole year centers on what the Lord + Jesus, the Savior, has done for us, and continues to do for us. We rejoice over His gifts, we give thanks for our salvation. Our lives are directed and guided by His doing, not by our doing. Let the rest of the world live by what they think they can do. In the end, there is no salvation in the world’s foolish dreams and desires. There is only salvation in this baby Boy Who sheds His blood for us for the very first time today.

And by His placing Himself under the Law for us today—by His obedience to the command to be circumcised—He frees us from the bondage of the Law. We are unable to be saved by our obedience to the Law, but we are saved by grace through faith in Christ + Jesus, Who has fulfilled the Law for us and suffered our punishment on the tree of the holy cross. And the faith which clings to this promise comes from our hearing the Word of God, and from continuing in the sacraments, which are the Word of God in physical form. In other words, even our faith is a gift from God. He even gives us our faith, through the Word and Sacraments by the working of the Holy Ghost.

Today, our hope comes from, and our faith rests in, the Word of God made flesh, the Baby + Jesus born to the Blessed Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Ghost. If we are to look to the future at all this day, our future must be viewed with this Child + Jesus in mind, and what He has done for us. If we are to look to the past at all this day, our looking to the past must be viewed with the Child + Jesus in mind, and what He has done for us, and what He continues to do for us. If we are to look at all upon our present situations today, then we need to look to what Christ has done for us, and continues to do for us. He has placed Himself under the Law to fulfill the Law perfectly for us. He has suffered and died in our place on the tree of the holy cross. He has given us His holy Word for learning and instruction. He has given us water and the Word, so that we might be washed clean of our sin. He has sent us pastors to absolve us of all the sins of which we repent. And He has given us His very own Body and Blood for us to eat and drink for the forgiveness of our sins, for our salvation, and to give us an eternal life in Heaven. This is the Boy named + “*Jesus*,” this is our Savior. So, give thanks today for our Lord’s circumcision—for His first spilling of His Blood, and celebrate this great Child born to be our Savior. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give glory! I will extol Thee, O Lord, and I will praise Thy Name forever and ever. Amen.

The Votum:

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria!